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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YAOUNDE 000486

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CM](#) [ECON](#) [MAS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: CAMEROONIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PRAISES BILATERAL
RELATIONS

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Scott Ticknor for reasons 1.4 (d) and (e)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On May 18, Ambassador met with
Cameroonian Minister of External Affairs Henri Eyebe Ayissi,
who praised bilateral relations and cited regional and
maritime security as his top foreign policy priority. He
claimed to know little about an ongoing case of piracy
involving an American company. He noted presidential support
for a planned Africa-wide gendarme training center outside
Yaounde. End summary.

US-Cameroon Relations

¶2. (SBU) Ayissi praised Cameroon-U.S. cooperation and
congratulated us for being voted into the Human Rights
Council, adding that human rights is a priority for President
Biya. He hoped the Obama administration would develop close
ties to Africa, especially Cameroon, and that President Obama
would keep Cameroon in his future travel plans. "We
appreciate what you do for us," he added.

Priorities

¶3. (SBU) When asked about his foreign policy priorities,
Ayissi said security in Central Africa topped the list,
especially maritime security. He appreciated U.S. assistance
in this area and noted the recently signed maritime security
agreement signed by the Economic Community of Central African
States (CEAC). He hoped the U.S. would support Cameroon's
aspirations to be a logistics base for an Africa-wide standby
force. Ayissi also pointed to the priority need to address
the global economic crisis and said Cameroon planned to have
high level participation at a G-20 meeting on the world
economic situation in New York in June.

Other Issues

¶4. (C) Tidewater: Ambassador asked if the Foreign Minister
had any update on the Tidewater hostage situation. (Note:
pirates attacked a ship owned by Tidewater, a U.S. company,
in Cameroonian waters on March 14, taking four non-Amcit
hostages. The ship is now reportedly in Nigerian waters and
sources in Delegate General of National Security (Chief of
Police) told us that the Foreign Minister had been charged
with approaching the Nigerian government to help resolve the
problem, which the Nigerian High Commissioner to Cameroon
later confirmed to Ambassador. End note.) Ayissi said this
matter was being handled by the Minister of Defense and
required "great discretion".

¶5. (SBU) EIFORCES: Ambassador asked about how the
government views EIFORCES, a planned gendarme peacekeeping
training center based outside of Yaounde. Earlier in the
week the Foreign Ministry had helped organize a visit by the
entire diplomatic corps and a visiting African Union/European

Union delegation to the EIFORCES site, including a briefing and a live demonstration of riot control techniques. Ayissi affirmed that the President was committed to creating EIFORCES but that the timing and funding were to be determined. He hoped the U.S. would support it (Ambassador noted we have a small amount of money for such support).

¶16. (U) American School Murder: Ambassador explained that in 2005 Franck Abega, a Cameroonian student whose father is a Mayor of Yaounde and a former soccer star, murdered a fellow student at the American School of Yaounde (ASOY). Abega had since been under guard at a Yaounde psychiatric hospital but on April 20 he showed up at ASOY asking for a specific teacher. Ambassador noted that this was deeply disturbing to ASOY and the Embassy. Abega was detained with RSO help and is now under guard again in the hospital but Ambassador stressed concerns for the safety of the school and the importance of this not happening again. The Foreign Minister understood our concern and the importance of the issue and promised to look into it. (Note: Embassy had demarched the Ministry formally about our concerns in a diplomatic note on April 23. Ambassador had also raised this issue earlier with the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Justice. The Justice Minister is investigating the case and promised to seek a more satisfactory solution for Abega and the school. DCM also reinforced our concerns with the Deputy Secretary General at the Presidency and the Director of the Americas at the Foreign Ministry. End note.)

Comment

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¶17. (C) In his typically awkward style, Ayissi brought seven note takers into the meeting, staged the press outside, and expounded in flowery, legalistic French without saying much. We believe he knows more about the Tidewater issue than he was willing to discuss. He seemed genuinely positive about U.S.-Cameroon relations, suggesting that Biya might seek a meeting with President Obama on the margins of the UNGA in September. Ayissi asked specifically about U.S. Middle East policy, whereas his Director of Americas asked earlier in the week for information about U.S.-Latin America policy - pointing to an interest in the Obama Administration's broader approach to foreign policy.
GARVEY